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The Issue of Cultural Identity in Algeria

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i. Introduction:

The question of cultural identity stands as one of the most vital issues that continue to impose themselves persistently within contemporary societies. This significance stems from a constant effort to assert the self and preserve fundamental values and distinct cultural features. Identity, therefore, constitutes one of the most complex challenges facing modern societies, as maintaining it—along with its diverse components—against erasure or distortion has become a central concern. Based on this importance, the present study explores the linguistic meanings of cultural identity, its various dimensions and components, and the relationship between identity, cultural diversity, and plurality. It further examines the role of socialization in shaping individual identity, as well as the identity crisis and the colonial attempts to erase Algerian cultural identity. In Algeria, the issue of identity arises as a sociological question rooted in the historical evolution of the debate surrounding Algerian national identity.

This debate finds its origins in the period of anti-colonial resistance, which generated profound social upheaval and was marked by the emergence of a resistant national discourse. Such discourse, visible especially in Algerian newspapers of the time, called for a firm attachment to the national identity in its Arab and Islamic dimensions, countering the French colonial project of linguistic and cultural domination. Following independence, the Algerian state sought to institutionalize a national identity project grounded in the notion of national sovereignty. However, with the outbreak of the events of October 1988, the country entered a particularly sensitive phase in its history. This period witnessed an intense debate over identity-related issues—especially religion and language—in both Arabic- and French-language press. This renewed debate can be seen as a re-articulation of colonial-era discourse adapted to a new historical context.

Inst multiplicity and plurality, and continuity against change and transformation, with regard to what receives attention and self-care or personality assessment, while insisting on self-congruence and individual continuity" (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 700).

Mohamed Wahban views identity as "a spiritual and moral bond between the individual and their nation, whereby the individual seeks to elevate the status and prestige of that nation among other nations. This bond requires the individual to live with full awareness of the defining components of their nation's identity, which simultaneously serve as factors distinguishing it from other nations, and to consistently strive to preserve these components against causes of disintegration and collapse. This is accompanied by the individual's pride in, reverence for, respect toward, and loyalty to their nation's symbols. The most prominent

components of national identity include religion, language, culture, and history, while the flag represents one of the most important symbols of identity" (Wahban, n.d., p. 5).

Mohamed Imarah states: "The identity of something consists of its constants that renew themselves without changing. They manifest and reveal themselves without yielding their place to their opposites as long as the self remains alive, like a fingerprint for a human being. One is distinguished by it from others, and its effectiveness renews itself, and its presence becomes evident whenever the contingencies of erasure and concealment are removed, without giving way to other fingerprints" (Imarah, cited in Wahban, p. 6).

ii.   **Culture**:

Culture is one of the primary keys to understanding the cultural identity of any people, if not the true foundation for such understanding. While identity represents distinctiveness as previously mentioned, culture is the dimension through which distinctiveness in cultural identity occurs. Abdulaziz al-Twaijri states: "Culture is the soul of the nation and the title of its identity. It is one of the fundamental pillars in the construction and advancement of nations. Every nation has a culture from which it derives its elements, components, and characteristics, and it is shaped by it and attributed to it. Every society has its own culture that characterizes it, and every culture has its own distinguishing features" (al-Twaijri, 2001, p. 99).

Mohamed Talbi poses a question about the nature of culture, stating: "We are faced with a bewildering number of definitions, which proves that there is no satisfactory definition of culture that pleases everyone. Culture is not something tangible that can be confined within a narrow, rigid definition. Like life itself, it cannot be fully comprehended. Nevertheless, we must state what we mean by the word culture" (Bishta & Khoury, 2000, p. 29).

Regarding the definition of culture, the term has been extensively addressed. Edward Tylor defined it as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law,

custom, and any other capabilities or habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Thompson et al., 1997, p. 9).

Raymond Firth explains culture more expansively, stating: "If we view society as representing a group of individuals, then culture is their way of life. If we consider it a set of social relations, then culture is the content of those relations. If society consists of reciprocal relationships among individuals and bodies, then culture comprises the accumulated material and non-material manifestations that people inherit, transmit, and utilize. Culture has an intellectual content that regulates human behavior. From a behavioral perspective, culture is acquired and learned behavior, and moreover, it serves as a motivator for actions and deeds" (Abdul Jawad, 1983, p. 82).

T. S. Eliot states: "Culture is the way of life of a particular people living together in one place. This culture manifests itself in the people's arts, social system, customs, conventions, and religion. But the combination of all these elements does not constitute culture, although we often speak for convenience as if this were the case. These elements are merely the parts into which a culture can be divided, just as the human body can be divided through dissection. But just as a human being is more than the sum of the various parts constituting their body, so too is culture more than the sum of its arts, conventions, and beliefs. All these elements influence one another, and to properly understand any one of them, we must understand them all. There are different levels of culture, but they all constitute parts of a single shared culture within a society that distinguishes this society from others" (Abdul Jawad, 1983, p. 81).

Malek Bennabi states: "Culture, when defined in practical terms, is the totality of moral qualities and social values that influence the individual from birth and unconsciously become the relationship linking their behavior to the lifestyle of the environment into which they were born. According to this definition, culture is the milieu in which the individual forms their temperament and personality. It is the environment that reflects a particular civilization and within which civilized

humanity operates" (Bennabi, 2000, p. 74). He adds: "Thus, we see that this definition encompasses both the philosophy of the individual and the philosophy of the group—that is, the foundations of the individual and the foundations of society—while taking into account the necessity of harmonizing all these foundations into a unified entity created through the process of synthesis carried out by the spiritual spark when the dawn of a civilization breaks" (Bennabi, 2000, p. 74).

1. Principal Classifications of Culture :

Understanding the classifications of culture is essential, as it constitutes one of the fundamental bases for categorizing cultural identity and comprehending its components. Scholars have proposed various classifications of culture, though some have faced considerable criticism. Among the most prominent of these classifications is the binary division of culture into material and non-material culture. Material culture encompasses all the artifacts and tools that humans have created to adapt to their environment. Non-material culture, by contrast, includes all intangible cultural features such as beliefs, ideas, values, norms, artistic skills, and language, which can be transmitted from one generation to the next. Sociologists generally prefer to restrict their use of the term "culture" to refer exclusively to this non-material dimension. Nevertheless, some scholars, such as Talcott Parsons, argue that this separation between the two dimensions of culture is arbitrary and lacks a compelling empirical foundation. Every technological or artistic invention in its material form would not have emerged without preceding theoretical reflection upon it. Furthermore, material inventions can lead to new ideas and scientific investigations aimed at solving problems in industry and technology.

Thus, the two dimensions are intricately interconnected (Abdul Jawad, 1983, p. 82). Malek Bennabi, for his part, addressed cultural factors as determined across four distinct worlds: the world of persons, the world of ideas, the world of things, and the world of natural elements and phenomena. According to Bennabi, in order to establish a synthesis of cultural elements, a fundamental condition

must first be met: the creation or establishment of a necessary connection between the individual and the four worlds enumerated above. The world of persons holds primacy in this domain, not merely because of the intrinsic value of human dignity, but because it represents the cultural heritage with which the individual is endowed from birth—a heritage that provides the subjective measures determining human behavior and affirming belonging to a specific culture (Bennabi, 2000, p. 62).

iii. Cultural Identity: Nature and Concepts

Following the examination of the various concepts of identity and culture, numerous scholars and thinkers have sought to provide diverse definitions and understandings of cultural identity, viewing it as a composite of the identity and culture distinctive to an individual or people. Muhammad Sabila argues that cultural identity "is the unified and distinctive face of culture through which individuals feel they belong to a particular culture or civilization, creating a sense of shared identity and closeness to a common heritage and worldview, providing them with an identity card. It comprises the shared cultural manifestations among group members, which are highlighted and affirmed to distinguish them from other groups" (Sabila, 2009, p. 157).

Cultural identity is also defined as "the stable, essential, and shared collection of characteristics and general features that distinguish a nation's civilization from others, conferring upon national or ethnic identity a distinctive character that sets it apart from other national and ethnic identities" (al-Twaijri, p. 47). Nadim al-Bitar defines cultural identity as encompassing "the sum of cultural traits dominant over an extended historical period that distinguish one human group from another" (Sabila, 2009, p. 152). Muhammad Zaghou views it as representing "the original sublime principles and self-rooted in individuals and peoples, as well as the foundations of humanity that constitute one's spiritual and material personal being. It reflects all economic, social, political, civilizational,

and future dimensions of group members' lives, such that each individual feels their original belonging to a particular society that distinguishes and differentiates them from other societies" (Zaghou, 2010, p. 94).

Al-Raqab and Ju'anini emphasize that cultural identity comprises "a collection of values, traditions, actions, and historical characteristics alongside intellectual, artistic, and spiritual dimensions, encompassing living and evolving behavioral manifestations that reflect dialogue and self-creativity, perpetually reconstructing themselves within their own specificity, nourished by the rich heritage of Arab society" (al-Raqab & Ju'anini, 2009, p. 15).

Abdulaziz al-Tai offers a comprehensive definition of cultural identity as "a group's consciousness of their own distinctiveness and what differentiates them from other cultures. Cultural identity encompasses recognized elements of civilizational influence such as language, religion, heritage, customs, intellectual values, social structure, shared memory, and collective aspirations. However, cultural identity does not exist in isolation from global transformations; rather, it engages in regional, national, and international interactions, intensifying as economic, social, cultural, and political levels advance" (al-Tai, 2011, p. 25).

Cultural identity holds paramount importance for the existence and continuity of peoples. Muhammad Ayyad notes that as peoples seek to define the meaning of their cultural identity, they come to understand themselves and their uniqueness, recognizing that differences in cultural identities enrich the global cultural landscape and necessitate substantial tolerance for dialogue among nations and peoples. Consequently, uncovering the sources of cultural identity and clarifying its content has become an imperative for preserving this identity, which possesses distinctive characteristics yet remains neither rigid nor closed, rather relative and contingent. This relativity constitutes the source of its capacity for renewal and perpetuation (Ayyad, 2002, p. 13).

Muhammad Sabila underscores that cultural identity, being foundational to peoples' existence, emerges from their past and is inscribed in their future. It is neither static nor passive but rather a historical and forward-looking given, constantly oriented toward updating and renewal. The sense of cultural identity is reinforced when confronted with an external threat or challenge that endangers it through erasure or assimilation, as occurs in the collision between civilizations at unequal stages of development, or among immigrant and expatriate communities exposed to cultural distortion (Sabila, 2009, p. 150).

iv.   **Levels of Cultural Identity**:

Cultural identity encompasses multiple levels owing to its comprehensiveness and breadth. Despite this multiplicity, these levels remain integrated. In this framework, Muhammad al-Jabri affirms that cultural identity has three levels: individual, collective, and national-ethnic. The relationship among these levels is fundamentally determined by the nature of the "other" that cultural identity confronts. Cultural identity is not a finished or final given but rather a becoming, developing entity that moves either toward contraction or expansion. It is enriched by the experiences, suffering, victories, and aspirations of its people, as well as by its positive and negative interactions with other cultural identities.

Cultural identity operates across three interlocking circles with a common center: First, the individual within a single group (tribe, sect, or civil community) represents a distinctive and independent identity, an "I" with an "other" within the group itself. Second, groups within a nation resemble individuals within a group; each possesses distinguishing features within the shared cultural identity, with its own "I" and "other" through which it recognizes itself. Third, a single nation in relation to other nations experiences the same dynamics, though more abstractly, with broader scope and greater capacity for plurality, diversity, and difference (al-Jabri, 1998, p. 298).

Thus, three levels constitute cultural identity: individual, collective, and national-ethnic. The relationship among these levels is neither static nor fixed but in constant flux, varying in breadth depending on circumstances, conflicts, and solidarities driven by competing interests. The relationship is determined by the nature and position of the "other": if internal within the group's circle, individual identity asserts itself as "I"; if within the nation's circle, collective identity (tribe, sect, party, etc.) replaces individual identity; if external, outside the nation or state, national or ethnic identity fills the space of the "I" (al-Jabri, 1998, p. 299).

The difference between individual and national identities is one of kind rather than degree: individual identity bears primarily physical characteristics, while national identity bears primarily cultural characteristics. These two identities are not contradictory but rather related as part to whole (Ibn Nu'man, 1995, p. 11).

Al-Jabri adds that cultural identity achieves completion only through three references: homeland, nation, and state. The homeland is land and the dead—geography and history unified into a single spiritual entity inhabiting the heart of each citizen. The nation represents the spiritual lineage woven by shared culture, comprising historical memory and aspirations expressed through collective will rooted in love of homeland and fidelity to "land and the dead." The state embodies the legal expression of homeland and national unity, serving as the guardian of their integrity and representation. Any assault on homeland, nation, or state constitutes an assault on cultural identity, and vice versa (al-Jabri, 1998, p. 299).

Muhammad Hatim observes that cultural identity operates at different levels; the populations of each Arab state exist at varying degrees of identity consciousness, yet are united by Arab cultural identity. This represents an advantage absent in the European Union, where each member state possesses its own identity but lacks a unified national identity. European Union member states speak different languages, lack a common history, and have experienced mutual conflict. Consequently, the notion of a single universal cultural identity remains logically untenable (Hatim, p. 55).

v. Components of Cultural Identity (Foundations and Dimensions):

Cultural identity is distinguished by the multiplicity of its pillars and elements. Al-Tizini states that identity is the essence of a thing; remove it and the thing loses its character. Thus, identity means the thing itself, society itself, the nation itself. Remove identity and it becomes something else. It comprises a complex dimension of social, historical, and cultural elements, as contemporary identity is not a product of the present alone but is rooted in ancient heritage. In the social context, people in any society are both creators of their identity and its product. Identity is grounded in social, cultural, economic, moral, and religious relations, and this complex of relations gradually produces, through historical development, human identity (al-Tizini, 1999, p. 38).

Al-Tai identifies cultural identity components as: national language and local dialects tied to a people's existence and development; religious and national values formed across centuries; customs, traditions, and norms deriving from those values; and the historical struggle through which peoples preserve their identity. Cultural identity, across time and space, produces what distinguishes a social group that shares the honor of belonging.

Muhammad Haqiqi affirms that Arab cultural identity from the Atlantic to the Gulf rests on faith, customs, history, religion, struggle, and Arab belonging (Hatim, p. 51). Muhammad Imarah discusses Arab Muslim cultural identity, stating that it is Islamic in essence. With Islam come the Arabic language, the tongue of Islam and its miraculous revelation. With Islam and Arabic comes history that combines national and religious history, a repository of memories preserving national continuity (Imarah, p. 10).

- **Fundamental Elements of Cultural Identity:**
1. **Religion**: The religious dimension serves as the foundation of cultural identity in most societies. No social system matches

the force and profound influence of religion in individual and collective life, thereby ensuring societal stability and security (Abdul Jawad, 1983, p. 111). Religion represents in traditional societies a central axis of life, with religious symbols and rituals permeating material, spiritual, cultural, and artistic dimensions (Giddens, 2011, p. 570).

Durkheim defines religion as a unified set of beliefs and practices connected to the sacred world, regulating human conduct. Émile Brunoff views it as worship possessing intellectual and emotional dimensions. Al-Khuraiji considers religion a life philosophy adopted by each group, with strong connections between social systems and belief structures (al-Khuraiji, 1990, p. 33-36).

Religion's regulatory power stems from being a natural feature of all human societies; it is faith rooted from childhood; and its spiritual authority surpasses positive law. Religion represents a cultural pattern enabling individuals to confront life's problems both in this world and the next (Abdul Jawad, 1983, p. 111-113).

The religious foundation of cultural identity in Algeria and the Arab world is Islam. Muhammad Imarah states that Islam, embraced by this nation's majority, became the true representative of its cultural authenticity. Islam shaped all life dimensions: customs, traditions, literature, sciences, philosophy, moral standards, and worldviews (Imarah, p. 7). Al-Raqab and Ju'anini affirm that religious beliefs constitute an essential element in deepening Arab Islamic cultural identity (al-Raqab & Ju'anini, p. 5).

2. **Language**: Language constitutes a primary pillar of cultural identity. It is our tool for perceiving the world, the distance between us and reality, the bridge between particular and universal. As Ibn Khaldun notes, language translates meanings from our minds into instruments shaping life (Nabil Ali, 2001, p. 231-232). Language reveals one's social position, origins, intellect, and abilities, exercising power through various levels of consciousness (al-Raqab & Ju'anini, p. 40).

Language is a fundamental component of cultural identity, like blood in a living body. It is the basis of spontaneous communication and the network transmitting heritage and knowledge. Every society clings to cultural identity through attachment to its language. As al-Tatawi states, hating one's language means hating oneself and accepting inferiority, for language is our gateway to thought, and degrading it degrades us (al-Tatawi, 2005, p. 43).

Algerian, Arab, and Islamic cultural identity is distinguished by Arabic language alongside local languages. Arabic holds immense importance in shaping cultural identity; it is the record of Arab creativity and symbol of their unity, the foundation of nation formation and cultural container of societies (al-Raqab & Ju'anini, p. 13). Islamic religion became inseparable from Arabic, as the Quran states it was revealed in Arabic for comprehension.

3. **History**: History represents collective memory of the nation. All its remnants constitute memory's components: architecture, monuments, events, and ideas all express the group's past. History enriches human consciousness and unconsciousness; humans alone require memory preserving their deeds and aiding personality formation (Nassar, 1991, p. 23). Historical knowledge develops social self-awareness, playing a role analogous to memory's function in individuals (Rakitov, 1989, p. 11). It creates conditions for nations' cultural will to understand themselves as distinctive societies. Historical consciousness ensures continuity and connection across generations (Nassar, 1991, p. 86).
4. **Customs** and Traditions (Heritage): Customs and traditions constitute cultural identity dimensions. They represent social conduct achieved through experience, preserved, and transmitted across generations (Nassar, 1991, p. 55). Individuals receive them from birth like food and air (Nassar, 1991, p. 56).

Al-Jabri defines heritage as the cultural, intellectual, religious, literary, and artistic inheritance—doctrine, law, language, literature, intellect, and mentality. It is

simultaneously epistemological and ideological with rational foundation and emotional dimension (al-Jabri, 1991, p. 24). Heritage extends beyond museum artifacts to include language, ideas, customs, sciences, arts, social relations, and worldviews (Abdullah Fahad, 1986, p. 16).

5. **Race**: Race's importance in shaping identity depends on political instrumentalization and mobilization, providing groups with belonging and historical consciousness (Holborn, 2010, p. 111). Yet contemporary scholarship views race as illusory, particularly with globalization, migration, and mixture, since racial purity is mythical and populations derive from diverse racial backgrounds (Holborn, 2010, p. 100).

6. **Belonging**: Belonging constitutes a fundamental pillar of cultural identity. Without it, identity loses authentic meaning. Belonging is a meaning present in each individual, a feeling arising in childhood and strengthening with growth, translating into social action (al-Tizini, 1999, p. 38). While identity involves perceiving personal specificity, belonging involves feeling external factors expressed through loyalty.

Belonging is a feeling encompassing love, acceptance, and close attachment to community, satisfying human need for connection with others. It manifests in attachment to homeland, family, friends, and society. National belonging reflects the strong bond between individual and homeland, embodied in pride in national identity, respect for its symbols, and commitment to its systems (Khawni, 2011, p. 85).

Belonging plays a crucial role in directing cultural identity's nature. National belonging precedes ethnic belonging and may remain at geographical boundaries or extend to regional aggregation (Ould Khalifa, p. 105).

vi. **Components of Algerian Cultural Identity:**

The principal components of Algerian cultural identity do not differ formally from those of other cultural identities; however, they possess unique content, as is the case with any cultural identity. Identity itself represents this distinctiveness in all its meanings. Algeria enjoys multiple geographic belonging: it is a Maghrebi, Arab, African, and Islamic country. It has drawn from this diversity elements and customs enriching a culture rooted in these foundations and principles, with varied structures across a unified geographic space.

Numerous scholars have addressed Algerian cultural identity. Among them, the scholar Abd al-Hamid Ibn Badis stated: "We examined history and present circumstances and found the Muslim Algerian nation formed and existing as all nations of the world have formed and existed. This nation possesses a glorious history, religious and linguistic unity, distinctive culture, customs, and morality. It is the Algerian nation" (Amara, 2002, p. 173).

Muhammad al-Arabi Ould Khalifa notes that facts before and during liberation proved that Islam—as a moderate creed—and the Arabic language, alongside its Amazigh twin, form the axis of national identity. Each deepened within the other through bonds of kinship and solidarity, constituting the primary pillar of citizenship and the force moving identity from potentiality to actuality (Ould Khalifa, p. 93). Ibn Badis's observations provide clear identification of the principal components of Algerian cultural identity.

Primary Components of Algerian Cultural Identity:

A. Religion:

Algerian society adheres to Islam and its teachings. Islam exerts deep and comprehensive influence on national and particularly Algerian popular life. Its impact on the Algerian individual is undeniable. Language is saturated with religious meanings; culture and folklore blend with religion and its principles. This stems from Islam's multifaceted nature permeating individual and collective human dimensions, encompassing economic, spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and social spheres, granting it dominant force over adherents (Shtaih, 2011, p. 501).

B. Language:

Algeria possesses diverse languages and dialects, resulting from ethnic plurality inhabiting its territory. Arabic stands as the official educational language, while Amazigh functions as a local language. Islam, the Arabic language, and its Amazigh counterpart constitute the national identity's axis. Each deepened within the other through kinship and solidarity bonds, according to Ould Khalifa (Ould Khalifa, p. 93).

Because Arabic represents a principal component of national character, Algerian society has preserved its Arabness and language, advocating for its status as official language in schools and administration (Sahrawy, 2009, p. 88).

Arabic acquires distinctive character in Algerian society's view. It is not merely a means preserving national identity but a foundation for future development and progress. It functioned as a protective instrument for Algerian national identity and a factor confronting all attempts at domination and assimilation perpetrated brutally by colonialism (Sahrawy, 2009, p. 90).

C. History:

History constitutes a principal component of cultural identity. Algeria possesses ancient history from antiquity through French colonization. History embodies markers of Algerian character and its development. The struggle's history, particularly against colonialism, and the November Revolution occupy preeminent positions in cultural identity, glorified in the national anthem and celebrations (al-Mili, p. 9).

Mubarak al-Mili affirms that Algeria possesses venerable history; even within deserts emerged sophisticated civilizations whose traces remain evident. The ancient Amazigh people created shared history with Arabs spanning centuries (Rashid, 1999, p. 9).

Amara Amora emphasizes that reviving national spirit rests upon historical knowledge. Algeria's lengthy history encompasses both laudable and regrettable events; these must be studied seriously to provide lessons for future generations, enabling them to understand themselves and take pride in their identity (Amara, p. 3).

1. Customs and Traditions:

Algerian society enjoys substantial cultural diversity according to the ethnic minorities inhabiting its territory, their historical contact with other cultures, and religious and sectarian influences. This demonstrates Algeria's cultural richness. As a Maghrebi, Arab, Islamic, and African country having contacted numerous civilizations, customs and traditions diversified considerably, distinguishing Algeria through unique practices reflecting its distinctiveness.

E. Belonging:

It represents the bond connecting individual to community and homeland. Ould Khalifa notes that individuals are obligated to belonging to their community, which defines their identity and standards, uniting ethnic and cultural characteristics. These characteristics begin with pride in place (homeland) and sacred belief, extending to language as a source of pride (Ould Khalifa, p. 109).

Belonging connects with proper citizenship—the loyalty and pride individuals hold toward their nation and people, translated into practical participation in all that serves national interest (Ould Khalifa, p. 112).

Belonging intertwines with history; without belonging there would be no revolution. Considerable interconnection appears among Algerian cultural identity's components: religion influences language, customs, and traditions; history narrates facts concerning these elements; language connects with religion, history, and customs as the instrument recording history and Quranic language. Belonging represents rooting and attachment to all these components within society.

vii. The Algerian State and the Question of Cultural Identity:
1. State Ideology and the Identity Project in Algeria:

Following independence, significant challenges emerged concerning transition from revolutionary to national discourse, from war

to peace, from colonialism to sovereignty, particularly in media and journalism. How could Algeria articulate state visions while preserving revolution's gains? How could identity projects be pursued through their elements and foundations? The true danger lies in the cultural legacy colonialism left behind—more perilous than land confiscation. This inheritance perpetuated colonial domination through cultural elements, particularly the French language, sustained by elites with strong institutional presence.

During colonialism, conflict was clear against an external group (Exogroupe), with defined mechanisms. However, post-independence generated debate—sometimes hidden, sometimes overt—with internal groups (Endogroupe), threatening revolutionary values and state aspirations.

The French government, recognizing Algerian independence, devised an effective means to maintain influence and French linguistic hegemony over Algerian life. Accordingly, thousands of young Algerians received administrative training through the Lacoste program to ensure French persistence. Unity among francophone elites stemmed from saturation in French culture and its associated ideas, orientations, and lifestyle patterns.

Discussion of francophonie in Maghrebi countries connected to colonial domination. Writers using French for literary creation emerged; this literature was considered a consequence of colonial projects aimed at destroying Algerian identity and Arabic language.

Post-independence, francophones positioned themselves in sensitive posts: administration, economic institutions, and key government sectors. The Lacoste cohort exploited these positions through internal and external francophone training, imposing barriers against hiring Arabic-speaking youth.

Abdullah Rakibi indicates that francophones' true objective was defending their interests. He states: "Our francophones chose to side with French, defending their positions in power and their social, political, and cultural standing and material benefits, attempting to link their interests to national interests—a fundamental fallacy" (Rakibi, 1993, p. 140).

Moroccan scholar Molim al-Arusi describes the linguistic situation in state institutions: senior state institutions are formally Arabized, yet actual discourse in financial institutions, industries, and real decision-making centers remains French. Competing for crucial positions, frameworks trained outside the Maghreb (France, America) receive appointments. Regarding money management and profit, foreign languages retain priority.

Muhammad Benis distinguishes between French language and culture versus francophonie. Francophonie signifies non-French speakers using French and nations adopting French instead of national languages.

Maghrebi states employ French in managing public life. Elite segments use French defensively as language of science and openness, versus Arabic which they view as dead, closed language unsuited to modernity.

Post-colonialism created linguistic duality: groups speaking Arabic versus French in social life. Malek Bennabi stated: "The country no longer contains two elites but two overlapping groups; one representing the country's traditional historical face, the other desiring to create history anew" (Bennabi, 2000, p. 141). This phenomenon extended through administrative, educational, and economic spheres. Linguistic duality generates results contradicting national culture (Bennabi, 2000, p. 45).

Arabic and French usage in Algeria occupies special status given historical period specificities. It does not proceed from neutrality but expresses relationships characterized by confrontation, conflict, and exercise of power and social influence at individual and collective levels (Ibrahimi, 1997, p. 53).

2. Discourse of Identity: From Revolutionary to State Ideology

The independence period cannot be viewed subjectively; it was marked by complex political reality featuring factional struggles within government. Culturally, it exhibited

educational system disintegration, widespread illiteracy, and integrationist currents in audiovisual media, particularly French-language press, whose imprint persists in ideological orientation today.

Post-independence Algerian journalism experienced qualitative transformation yet remained neither comprehensive nor radical due to colonial cultural legacies: over 80% illiteracy, absent expertise, and francophile intellectuals infiltrating decision-making centers (Ibrahimi, 1997, p. 54).

Despite integrationist currents, this period exhibited uniformity across sectors, particularly media. Government shifted toward adopting identity discourse through preserving revolutionary gains and national sovereignty. The state adopted Arabization ideology to end colonial cultural domination. It created Algerian newspapers to counter French press such as Alger Républiqueowned by private sector.

The Algerian state sought imposing control over journalism legally and ideologically via Arabization, embodying unified Algerian identity. "When power assumes state form, language becomes state concern. Language functions not merely as communication medium but as mediator transmitting symbols protecting collective memory, evoking shared feelings regarding values and beliefs, summoning collective identity consciousness" (Kraemer, 2001, p. 128).

Yet journalistic reality indicates French-language al-Shaʿab newspaper enjoyed greater circulation than Arabic al-Mujāhid. On June 22, 1965, circulation was: 60,000 for French al-Mujāhid, 20,000 for Arabic, and 36,000 during October 1988 events (Kraemer, 2001, p. 26).

The political system traced national sovereignty contours through daily press and nationalization of French newspapers. This sovereignty reflected Algerian identity's political dimension through directed media affirming identity long absent. Media was tasked with establishing Algerian state identity across political, cultural, and social dimensions through state-determined objectives:

- Media constitutes national sovereignty sector expressing revolutionary will under National Liberation Front leadership.
- Media mobilizes sectors toward national objectives.

Political discourse manifested identity emphasis through Arabization slogan confronting inherited linguistic circumstances. The Arabization question took root in internal contradictions, class struggles, and social group competition, representing authority contestation at various levels (Grandguillaume, 1983, p. 33).

Arabization in Algeria became open battle between two camps, each possessing adherents, interests, and strategies. The matter transcends academic or lexical dimensions, concerning rather Arabic's placement as sole national language sharing no linguistic space (Ghallāb, 1982, p. 6).

Arabization in the Maghreb generally and Algeria specifically raised problems within domination relations characterizing French-language communication. Problem persistence despite colonialism's disappearance suggests other dimensions.

Following October 1988 events, circumstances shifted: political and media pluralism emerged. Newspapers appeared reflecting diverse ideologies. Identity questions surfaced forcefully in media forums. Perspectives diversified: those adhering to national constants (Islam and Arabness) versus those denying them or remaining silent.

3. Language as Revealer of Elite Identity:

Egyptian writer Abd al-Rahman Farag Allah states: "Language constitutes a social fact, whether national, educational, religious, or literary. Language mirrors society and reflects the state" (Farag Allah, 1996, p. 435-449). The language question arises forcefully even in linguistically and religiously homogeneous societies like Egypt, which did not experience colonial domination as Algeria did. Al-Ahram newspaper rejected journalists' and writers' use

of foreign languages when discussing Arabic, considering it the national language and influence on Arab national consciousness. The opposition newspaper Al-Shaab considered the linguistic question "new colonialism"—usurpation in advertising, schools, and universities, targeting Islam and Arab nations (Farag Allah, 1996, p. 435-449).

Language as identity-revealing element reflects the importance of tensions and stakes in Arab societies, particularly those subjected to French presence. "Language is not merely a tool of power but the stakes of power in formation and governance. Language practice constitutes state concerns and subject of acute political conflict" (Farag Allah, 1996, p. 435-449).

Algerian newspapers addressed Arabization with increasing intensity following political and media pluralism, through laws generalizing Arabic use; their implementation's difficulties revealed the linguistic crisis's depth. "The 1998 Arabic generalization law sparked violent unrest, with Le Matin running a provocative headline: Can Algeria become Arabized?" (Farag Allah, 1996, p. 435-449).

Jamal Labidi views Algerian Arabization not as linguistic procedure but historical context. Disagreement roots are cultural, theater of social contradictions. Algeria's training system creates cultural duality: dual education prioritizes French-trained individuals, generating social disparities. Arabized education for the poor, dual education for employees. Arabization resistance stems from social interests threatening francophone elite positions (Labidi, 1989).

Labidi identifies two resistance forms:

Colloquial Arabic: Exploiting colloquial Arabic hides interests in maintaining the status quo. Francophone elites claim it as "Algerians' language," yet Algerian people defended Arabic through Quranic schools. Colloquial Arabic development requires Arabization; no contradiction exists between spoken and written language; causes are historical—cultural backwardness, colonialism, limited Arab world exchange.

Duality Problem: Duality preserves disparities between Arabized and francophone individuals in scientific and technical fields. A system equating national and foreign languages, justifying cultural dependency, reinforcing French.

French scholar Gilbert Grandguillaume identifies three languages in the Maghreb: Arabic, French, and mother tongue. The first two are written cultural languages; the latter daily conversational dialects (Grandguillaume, 1989, p. 48-57). Classical Arabic in Algeria—Quranic language—unlike Eastern Arabic, developed French as its evolved form. Arabization must extend two dimensions: French replacement and dialect substitution (Grandguillaume, 1989, p. 48-57).

Grandguillaume distinguishes two Arabization terms: Arabization-translation (foreign term Arabization) and Arabization-conversion (national dimension) (Grandguillaume, 1989, p. 131).

Grandguillaume contends newspaper articles on language evade real questions regarding functional relationships among Arabic, French, and dialects, adopting ideological-moral approaches appealing to "intellectual conscience".

The scholar argues that Arabization-conversion concept, tied to authenticity and national dimension, mismatches Algerian and general Arab specificity. Arabic language remains socially and culturally rooted, preserving national identity and resisting cultural dependency. "Arabization" terminology unsuited Algeria; Algerian resistance targeted French colonialism culturally through Islam and Arabic language.

Muhammad ibn Rabah views Arabization policy as "cultural hegemony reorganization" (Grandguillaume, 1989, p. 131). Algerian press positions on Arabization diverged following political-media pluralism. Al-Shaab published: "French Hysteria Against Algerian Arabization," considering French concern cultural not linguistic, and French language-science thesis yielded nothing (Ibn Nu'man, 1998, p. 229).

Le Monde covered Socialist Forces Front demonstrations against Arabization law, describing them as "protests against fundamentalist dangers" (Ibn Nu'man, 1998, p. 231). Liberté wrote under "Oqba and Kusaila" that language situation constitutes historical cultural problems reflecting Arab-indigenous confrontation, with Arabization as ideology-implantation tool (Ibn Nu'man, 1998, p. 276). El Watan pursued similar direction, viewing Arabization as continuous Arab invasion project affecting territories unrelated to Arab social structure (Ibn Nu'man, 1998, p. 277).

Language problems became francophone elite concerns—not technical or scientific issues but existential problems. Post-independence, they reproduced colonial discourse on culture, nation, and language. They questioned: Does national thought exist? Where seek answers to cultural problems? European books? (Madi, 1997, p. 117).

Identity as linguistic problem generated "embryonic intelligentsia" during colonialism, developing in favorable climate. Social integration connected to intelligentsia value systems. Omar al-Rajjan states: "Each group produces its discourse on society and nation. No pre- or post-independence union existed; no national thought contributed culturally to nation-building" (Madi, 1997, p. 1).

Algerian identity discourse produced multiple orientations. Writings show identity assumes linguistic dimension. Language questions remain the active driver of identity, intensifying when connected to functional issues like religion in its cultural form throughout the Maghreb and particularly Algeria.

Conclusion :

Raising the question of cultural identity necessarily unveils the complex story of identity in Algeria, one that conceals an ideological charge saturated with conflicting tensions, both directly and indirectly. This ongoing debate touches the deep historical and cultural layers of the French colonial situation in Algeria, which sought to implant an alternative identity through a budding intelligentsia fashioned by multiple means, as if history were reproducing itself in new configurations.

The issue of Algerian identity, before and after independence, has been a central concern of elites and intellectuals in mosque sermons, academic discourse, and the press. Yet this debate, despite its cultural façade, is deeply rooted in social interests, as segments of the elite perceived a threat to their social positions. The controversy intensified especially after the events of October 1988, with the democratic transition and the emergence of political and media pluralism.

Consequently, the question of Algerian identity became highly active in the fields of education, politics, and journalism, within arenas permeated by ideological underpinnings that often serve to justify particular interests. This study has sought to uncover the common roots of disagreement over Algerian identity, conceived as grounded in two central objective markers—Islam and the Arabic language—which function as key carriers of identity and frames of meaning for collective consciousness.

Analysis of circulating discourses shows that identity is also mobilized to heighten social tensions, either to defend the status quo or to renegotiate it, so that identity itself—understood as a cultural depth—becomes the locus of an ongoing social struggle. This cultural depth has taken shape, in the Algerian case, as a confrontation between two opposed worlds and identities: an Arabic-speaking group and a francophone group, with language operating as the main revealing and dividing line between them. Such a configuration reflects a profound crisis within the Algerian cultural field, lying at the heart of the broader social debate over the components of national identity and the meanings of belonging in both present and future.

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